

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON DARIEN AYALA, NEW ACTING VICE
MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

REF: PANAMA 3633

1. DARIEN ARMANDO AYALA W., NAMED JUNE 29 AS ACTING VICE MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS, HAS LITTLE EXPERIENCE IN FOREIGN POLICY AND A HISTORY OF COMMUNIST AFFILIATION. EDUCATED AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE AND LA MOLINA UNIVERSITY IN PERU (B.S. IN AGRICULTURE), AYALA IS A NEPHEW OF LT. COLONEL MANUEL NORIEGA (GN, G-2) AND REPORTEDLY WAS FOR A SHORT TIME NORIEGA'S ROOMMATE WHILE BOTH WERE ATTENDING LA MOLINA.

2. NAMED VICE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE IN FEBRUARY 1971 (UNDER THEN MINISTER AND NOW VICE PRESIDENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION, NILSON ESPINO), AYALA WAS APPOINTED DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN REFORM COMMISSION (NARC) IN OCTOBER 1972. ACCORDING TO MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SOURCES, HE WAS REPORTEDLY REGARDED BY MIDDLE-LEVEL PARTIDO DEL PUEBLO (PDP) MEMBERS AS A PARTY MEMBER, AND HIS APPOINTMENT TO THE NARC WAS VIEWED BY THE PDP AS A STRENGTHENING OF THE PARTY'S POSITION IN THE GOVERNMENT. WHILE NARC DIRECTOR, AYALA WAS REPORTED TO HAVE REPLACED "CONSERVATIVE" COMMISSION EMPLOYEES WITH LEFTISTS AND PDP MEMBERS. ON NOVEMBER 21, 1973, HE IS REPORTED TO HAVE RESIGNED
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FROM THE PDP, ALLEGING THAT IT WAS "OPPORTUNISTIC AND COWARDLY".

ACCORDING TO PDP SOURCES, AYALA' DEPARTURE WAS VIEWED WITH INDIFFERENCE; HE WAS REGARDED AS HAVING A POOR FOUNDATION IN MARXISM AND AS HAVING TENDED TO TAKE POORLY TIMED OR DISRUPTIVE INITIATIVES ON BEHALF OF THE PARTY.

3. IN JUNE 1974, AYALA WAS SHIFTED FROM THE NARC TO CHIEF OF PRODUCTION, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, A POSITION HE HELD UNTIL HIS APPOINTMENT AS ACTING VICE MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS. AID OFFICIALS WHO KNEW HIM FOUND HIM TO BE POLITE AND A COMPETENT TECHNICIAN AND ADMINSTRATOR, BUT UNRECEPTIVE TO AID PROGRAM PROPOSALS. AYALA'S ONLY KNOWN FOREIGN AFFAIRS EXPERIENCE WAS AS A MEMBER OF THE JUNE 5-6 PANAMANIAN SPECIAL DIPLOMATIC MISSION TO CUBA.

4. COMMENT: AYALA'S RECORD IN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE APPEARS TO PLACE HIM ON LEFT OF POLITICAL SPECTRUM; HOWEVER, HIS UNCLE, LUIS CARLOS NORIEGA, DESCRIBES HIM AS A "MODERATE" IN HIS POLITICAL VIEWS. IT APPEARS THAT WHATEVER HIS POLITICAL INCLINATIONS, AYALA MAY BE ANOTHER OF TORRIJOS' OPPORTUNISTIC NATIONALISTS.

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